

TOPSHOP

Topshop is one of the biggest UK-based womenswear and accessory brands, offering fashionable, trend-led products on a global scale.

However, over the past decade they have experienced a decline, resulting in the brand going into administration in 2020 and it consequently being bought out by ASOS in 2021.



STRATEGIC ISSUES

The brand received bad publicity on numerous occasions because of its link with Sir Phillip Green; accused of bullying and harassment, which consequently tarnished the brand name (Drapers, 2020).

Topshop's minimal sustainable efforts resulted in an inability for the brand to compete within an industry, where demand for ethical manufacturing and transparency is increasing (Guardian, 2019).

Topshop's lack of digital investment caused them to fall behind in a world that is embracing digital technologies, which has been especially damaging with Covid-19 lockdowns the dramatic shift to e-commerce (Vogue, 2019)

NEWS & ANALYSIS

The Rise and Fall of Topshop: What Went Wrong

Parent-company Arcadia's collapse marks the UK's biggest corporate casualty of the pandemic. What comes next for the brand that was once the crown jewel of the high street?



Topshop

● This article is more than 2 years old

Topshop's decline marks the end of the high street's golden age

The chain that democratised British fashion has lost out to Instagram and online retailers



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. For Topshop to regain its popularity and reputation, greater consideration of changing consumer behaviour and demands is vital, therefore investment into digital shopping experiences, and online presence is necessary to ensure competitiveness.
2. Topshop must recognize the rise of the conscious consumer (Forbes, 2019), and the influence it is having, with the emergence of ethical fashion brands focusing on sustainability (Guardian, 2020), in order to stay relevant within an everchanging industry.
3. Lastly, Topshop should focus on increasing consumer acquisition and retention, to boost market share, by capitalising on two of the biggest trends circulating the fashion world currently; ethical manufacturing (Chan, 2015) and digital experiences (McKinsey, 2017).

INDIVIDUAL BRAND CONCEPT

In order for Topshop to be recognised as an ethical brand, sustainability needs to be embraced from within, throughout the entirety of the product lifecycle. Therefore, the development of a sustainable sourcing plan, that ensures ethical manufacture and transparency is necessary.

The sustainable sourcing plan will be based around four pillars, all of which together, will reduce Topshop's environmental impact, as well as increase awareness amongst consumers.

1. TRANSPARENCY
2. CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODEL
3. ECO-FRIENDLY MATERIALS
4. COMMUNICATION

SUSTAINABILITY SOURCING PLAN

The plan outlines the importance of implementing a variety of strategies focusing on different types of innovation, but ultimately with the aim of sustainable development.

Analysis of the different strategies outlined, is carried out for their applicability to Topshop; from this a detailed overview of a sustainable sourcing plan, specific to Topshop, was constructed.

	TRANSPARENCY:	CIRCULAR MODEL:	ECO-FRIENDLY MATERIALS:	COMMUNICATION:
BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION:	Increased trust between business and consumer (Forbes, 2018). Makes those in positions of power more accountable (McKinsey, 2017).	Promotes product longevity and better quality through innovation (Ourgoodbrands, 2021) Reduces waste and overall environmental impact (Ourgoodbrands, 2021).	Reduces overall environmental impact (Lawerence, 2015). Use of sustainable materials gives brands a competitive advantage (Peters & Simaens, 2020)	Enables brands to demonstrate sustainable development (Gardner et al, 2019) Allows consumers to make more informed purchase decisions (Guardian, 2014).
CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION:	Due to the complexity of fashion supply chains, visibility and traceability upstream is difficult (Fashion Revolution, 2016). Effective transparency requires high levels of resources and time (Vogue, 2018).	Design limitation (Koszevska, 2018) Financial and economic barriers in regard to technology and resources (Oghazi & Mostaghel, 2018). Fast fashion acts as a barrier in terms of competing (Koszevska, 2018).	Organic and renewable materials tend to be more costly than conventional fabrics (Jin Gam & Banning, 2011). Limited material choice and colour options with sustainable fabrics (Jin Gam & Banning, 2011).	The lack of standardised information to communicate sustainable development effectively (Vogue, 2018) Difficulty to change individual behaviour and influence shopping habits (Barber, 2014).
METHODS:	Blockchain Technology	Recycling Initiatives Re-think the design process Investment into innovative recycled materials .	Organic and Renewable Materials Recycled Materials Innovative sustainable fibres	Social Media Online Brand Website Annual Industry Reports

TOPSHOP'S SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

T O P S H O P

"TOPSHOP'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERS ALL ASPECTS OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN, COVERING THE FULL PRODUCT LIFECYCLE, ENSURING MINIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT BY WORKING TOWARDS A CLOSED-LOOP MODEL AND ENABLING OUR CUSTOMERS TO MAKE MORE INFORMED CHOICES" (TOPSHOP SUSTAINABILITY TEAM, 2021)

TRANSPARENCY

As a brand we commit to full transparency of our supply chain, by mapping our product lifecycle as far back as raw material cultivation, with the use of blockchain technology.

Collaboration throughout the supply chain is vital to ensure ethical manufacturing standards are met. We plan to offer our consumers visibility and traceability using an app to scan garment labels, to create a more honest and open relationship as we move forward.



CIRCULARITY

Topshop is working towards closing the loop throughout all aspects of the business. We aim to reduce overall waste by utilising recycled and biodegradable materials in our products and packaging, as well as promote product longevity; all of which supports our shift to circularity.



The release of our first circular collection will launch next season to mark the beginning of our journey towards a more sustainable future; bringing us closer to our target of only using recyclable or sustainable materials by 2028.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

In order for Topshop to significantly reduce its environmental impact, a focus on sourcing eco-friendly materials is essential, therefore, as mentioned, Topshop has set a goal to use only recyclable or sustainable materials by 2028.

Topshop's intake of materials such as organic cotton and recycled polyester, amongst other more innovative fibres, will massively increase, as we have dedicated a sustainability team to source environmentally friendly alternatives.

Some examples of material innovation that Topshop have recently introduced into their collections, include, Orange Fibre, Bamboo Fibre and Circulose; a material made entirely from discarded cotton.

To ensure the integrity of our products, all materials will be traceable using blockchain. Additionally, annual industry reports containing supplier lists will be published to enhance the Topshop-consumer relationship.

This displays Topshop's plan, therefore demonstrating the communication element of its sustainable plan. This will be used for Topshop to inform and engage with consumers regarding its current and potential plans for sustainable development.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Topshop must allocate greater **investment to a sustainable development strategy**, to minimise its impact, and ultimately help save the planet from years of affliction.
2. In order for Topshop to regain its position and popularity within the market, great attention needs to be focused on sustainable development, together with effective communication, to become **recognised as an ethical retailer**.
3. To ensure Topshop's relaunch is a success, the common misconception that sustainable clothes are always bland and boring (Harris et al, 2015) will need to be proved wrong, by **delivering trend-inspired innovative collections with a minimal carbon footprint**.

The sustainable sourcing plan will provide Topshop with the tools necessary to significantly reduce its environmental impact if implemented effectively and across the whole brand. Whilst this will hugely benefit the environment, Topshop will also experience improved customer loyalty and acquisition, helping them to regain popularity and its position within the market.

The plan covers 4 key aspects of business, which if all introduced and embraced throughout Topshop's relaunch should ensure them to become recognized as an ethical fashion brand with a reduced carbon footprint.